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A TECHNIQUE FOR THE LENGTHENED PERIOD

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The supervised-study period includes every phase of teaching that aids pupils in (1) mastering subject-matter, (2) forming study habits, (3) acquiring ability to apply knowledge in new situations, and (4) developing qualities of good citizenship, such as co-operation, initiative, desire to work for the common good, suspended judgment, and toleration for others.

Technique refers to the skill with which the teacher handles pupils and utilizes time and materials in securing results. It is the manner in which the teacher secures self-activity on the part of the greatest number.

In the Bucyrus High School the periods vary in length from sixty-two to sixty-seven minutes. This discussion relates to the sixty-two-minute period. The period is made up of the following divisions with the time allotments stated: (1) recapitulation—five minutes; (2) statement of business of the day—two minutes; (3) discussion—twenty-five minutes; (4) assignment—five minutes; and (5) study period—the attack—twenty-five minutes. The method of conducting the entire period is based on certain recognized principles of instruction and management: (a) self-activity, (b) maximum participation, (c) proportion, (d) novelty and variety, and (e) dispatch.

The principle of self-activity affirms that one is educated through what one does. The teaching in the Bucyrus High School is based on the fundamental principle that learning and doing are inseparably linked, that is, that learning is the result of the activity of the learner, not something resulting from a pouring-in process on the part of the teacher.

The principle of maximum participation aims to secure as many as possible as participants, leaving as few as possible as onlookers.

According to the principle of proportion, significant considerations are first with reference to both content and method. Subject-matter which best meets the needs of the group receives the most careful and thorough attention. Non-essentials are neglected.

Good business sense demands that the classroom teacher work with speed. The affairs of the period need to be executed quickly. A loss of one minute means a total loss of thirty-pupil minutes. If this loss of time is increased to two or three minutes, the total loss in pupil-minutes becomes a matter of concern.

The recapitulation.—Since one is educated by his own responses which depend on two factors, namely, (1) his past experience and (2) his present frame of mind, the purpose of this part of the period is to aid the student in organizing his experiences and in putting himself in the right frame of mind for what is to follow. This division of the period should, therefore, include a summarization of the few preceding lessons and a presentation of the skeleton or framework of relevant parts of the course.

Applying the foregoing principles to this end, it is possible to have all students make a few notes on what was done in the preceding lesson or two. Several students can then read what they have written. If the principle of proportion does not seem to have been well observed, the teacher may call on some student who is likely to bring out needed points, or the teacher may suggest points that have been omitted. The teacher may furnish each member of the class with a mimeographed outline which is to be filled in. Requiring the class to write on a carefully worded problem for a few minutes, the answer for which was included in recent lessons, may be valuable. The class may be divided into several groups of four or five students each for the purpose of choosing the most important points so far considered. The chairman may add to it or criticize. Teacher or pupil may conduct some type of drill work. A class secretary's report may accomplish the purpose. A new story may be told by a student or by the teacher to illustrate the point. Material drawn from newspapers, magazines, or commercial and industrial fields may be brought in and discussed.

Beginning on time aids in observing the principle of dispatch. Daily reference in some way to the fundamentals of the subject

previously discussed helps to make the recapitulation cumulative. Graphic representation, material presented by use of a reflectoscope, or a new viewpoint presented by the teacher may be employed for the sake of novelty. Boys and girls like a change and, therefore, a review ought not to be so systematized that the same thing is done each period. Variety lends interest.

The aim.—The statement of the business of the day gives a “swing” to the work at hand. It implies a plan for the period; hence the work of each period needs to be carefully planned. It sets up an immediate goal and makes each boy and girl in the class want to know what is going to be done. In accordance with the principles of novelty and proportion, the teacher may challenge the class to find out as much as possible about a certain problem in a given length of time, or to discover what a certain statement means in the light of the day’s lesson. Each pupil may be required to formulate a statement of the business of the day. Pupils in conference with the teacher may take turns at formulating the statement and presenting it to the class, or a committee from the class may work in like manner. Probably in most cases this statement of the business of the day is an outgrowth of the previous day’s assignment; but it is more than a mere statement of the assignment.

The discussion.—The discussion part of the period serves several purposes. In relation to subject-matter, it is for the purpose of working over and clarifying material previously assigned. In relation to method, its purpose is to develop an interest in the common good, initiative, critical intelligence, and suspended judgment. Merely *reciting* from the textbook does not mean much except in memory subjects. The findings of an individual or group may be presented. The contributions of teacher or outside speaker are acceptable here. If the problem method is in use, it furnishes a splendid opportunity for exchange of ideas and experiences. The individual refers his experiences and actions to those of others, thereby giving point to his own. Mimeographed problems and topics aid materially in securing attention and in furnishing a basis for discussion. Every pupil should make some contribution during this part of the period. Continued emphasis on this point is essen-

tial. Pupils can readily see that what helps the class helps them individually, and they can also see that they have a part to play. Frequently the class can be divided into smaller groups with a chairman for each group and the problems discussed in groups. Each group may have a special problem to investigate. All of this will require some planning on the part of the group, and information will be needed from reliable sources before a conclusion may be reached. The teacher plays the rôle of guide and director, suggesting here and cautioning there. A good director capitalizes ability and leadership and does nothing which can be done by some member of the class. The problems used in the discussion may be written by the teacher or by a small committee working with the teacher.

Much depends on the type of problem used. An understanding of boys and girls and their experiences together with a clear conception of the aims of education enables the teacher to formulate suitable problems. In certain subjects much of the discussion will necessarily be of the drill type. In such cases the principle of variety should be observed by providing a few minutes of oral work, some blackboard work, some drill-card work, and perhaps some written work on paper. A student chairman may look after some of this, and the teacher may assume direct charge of part. When a student chairman is to assume charge, the teacher, on the day preceding, should go over the work with the pupil and be sure that careful plans are made and understood.

The assignment.—Following the assignment, and probably during a part of it, an attack is to be made on a certain content. The assignment therefore involves (1) the material to be attacked and (2) the method of attacking it. Always the aim of the assignment is to motivate the work to be done, to give purpose and zeal to the attack, and to create the desire to achieve.

If a sense of incompleteness is the result of the discussion, much has been accomplished by the assignment. The content to be attacked may then be considered. It is very difficult to secure good results by having a pupil take charge of this part of the period. This does not mean that it should not be attempted. In some cases it may well be done. The experience of the writers has been

that in most cases better results can be obtained when the teacher looks after this part of the period. The assignment of a chapter or of a certain number of pages is the poorest kind of an assignment and is the least valuable. The topical assignment is somewhat better. The problem method of assignment is unquestionably still better. It provides the pupil with something definite to think about and allows him to select what may best serve his purpose. It is also more easily adjusted to individual needs. If the problems are oral, pupils should make enough notes in the margin of their books to keep the problems clearly in mind. They should also make notes on references to be looked up, maps to be consulted, and special work to be done. If the problems are not in the text, time can be saved for the class by having them mimeographed. By the problem method, individual assignment can be approximated. The study thereby becomes more purposeful.

If the problem method is used, the plan of attack is fairly well outlined. Even in this connection, however, boys and girls need to be instructed in how to collect information and draw conclusions. The habit should be formed of using the dictionary in the case of all words the meanings of which are not clear. Pupils should have practice in using reference books and should get some experience in interviewing people who are experts in their lines of work. In brief, boys and girls should be taught how to study—a big undertaking. Before this can be done, the school administrator and the classroom teacher must know how to study and then learn to teach pupils how to study.

The attack.—In supervising the study of pupils the teacher should first see that the conditions are as conducive to study as possible. These conditions may be classified under three heads: (1) physiological, embracing those concerning health, food, time of eating, sleep, rest, and recreation; (2) physical, embracing light, heat, ventilation, absence of distraction, etc.; (3) psychological, concerning attitude toward study, a quick start, time limit, interest in subject, variety of appeal, etc.

The more technical part of the instruction involves a number of considerations: (1) The pupil must be taught how to study. The teacher might work out a definite mode of procedure suited

particularly to his own special subject and then take considerable time at various opportunities to instruct the pupils. (2) The pupil should be shown how to concentrate attention upon the subject at hand. This is a very important task, and he who has learned this has mastered a valuable lesson. (3) The pupil should be directed to have a clear purpose in his work—to find out just what is to be done. This will eliminate a great amount of inefficient study and wasted effort. A well-planned assignment will aid greatly in this direction, but the teacher must be ever on the alert during the study period to see that the pupil knows what to do. (4) The pupil should develop a vital interest in his work. (5) The pupil should develop a critical attitude toward his work and form the habit of suspended judgment. (6) The pupil should be taught the necessity of understanding material that is to be learned. He should not waste his time in mere repetitions but should seek to gain such understanding of the material that recall will be instant. (7) The pupil should be taught to distribute his time and not spend an undue amount of time upon the first part of the assignment to the neglect of the latter part. (8) The pupil should be taught accuracy, care in detail, desire for knowledge, and love for his work.

As the live teacher passes back and forth among the pupils, many ideas will occur to him which will aid in directing the pupils in their work. Two purposes should always stand out prominently among the others: (1) to find out when the child is in trouble and (2) to help him over the difficulty without giving too much assistance.